

General Clinton's Headquarters

HABS-NJ-504

Near Evesboro

Mt. Laurel Township, Burlington County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

General Clinton's Headquarters  
Near Evesboro  
Mt. Laurel Township, Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner: Aaron L. Collins

Date of Erection: 1764 and circa 1780

Architect:

Builder: Abraham Matlack

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and one-half, and cellar

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone to  
grade line

Exterior walls - brick  
(tapestried gable end);  
later concealed with  
stucco

Interior walls - lath  
and plaster on studding

Chimneys - brick built  
into inside of gable  
end walls

Roof - shingles

Historical Data:

Richard Matlack of Waterford Township,  
Gloucester County, New Jersey, in his will dated 17  
December 1774, devised to his son Abraham Matlack  
the 320 acre plantation "whereon he lives", in  
Burlington County....."which I purchased of Mathew  
Allen".\*

\*N. J. Archives, Vol. 34, p. 340

Accordingly it is assumed that this Abraham Matlack built the major unit of the house here considered, and in 1764 as the figures in the brickwork of the northwest gable end testify.

By local tradition, this house has been recognized as that "Headquarters near Evesham" from which General Sir Henry Clinton, in command of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Brigades of British soldiers, dated his order on 19 June 1778, that "The Troops to be under arms tomorrow morning at four o'clock and take up the same order of march as this day. They will receive orders to move off their ground from his Excellency, Lieutenant General Cornwallis". The British Army under General Clinton had crossed the Delaware River early on the morning of 18th June 1778 and camped at Haddonfield during the night. Next morning, the three Brigades mentioned above, with Clinton, took the great Road towards Mount Holly, reached Evesham (now Mount Laurel) that night, and camped there. (Nathaniel R. Ewan of Moorestown, N. J., 1939, H.A.B.S.)

After the death of Abraham Matlack, his executrix Abigail Matlack, with John Evans as trustee of the daughter Rachel Matlack Church (wife of Samuel Church) conveyed by Deed of 2 April 1835, to John Vandever the homestead tract, surveyed as 192 acres. Vandever by his Deed of 25 March 1838 conveyed 85.1 acres thereof to Charles Deacon; and Rebecca D. Deacon and Richard M. Hugg the executors of the latter by theirs of 18 April 1847 conveyed the same to Joseph E. Vinicomb, who by his of 24 March 1853 conveyed it to William R. Roberts, and he in turn passed it to Carlton Evans by Deed of 24 March 1859. Evans conveyed it to Joseph E. Evans by Deed of 25 March 1883, and the latter passed it to Edward R. Strawbridge on 29 November 1902. Esther W. Strawbridge, his devisee, conveyed the same to Frank P. Pearson by Deed of 7 February 1906, and he passed it to Isaac Pearson by his Deed of 25 March 1920, describing the property as situated in the

Townships of Mt. Laurel and Chester, bounded North by Isaac Collins' land, East by Elbow Lane, South by the road from Moorestown to Friendship, and West by the Main north branch of Pensaukin Creek, and containing 78 acres. Finally, the same property was conveyed by Deed of 5 January 1925 to Aaron L. Collins, the present owner.

In an article on Evesham Township ( from which was set off in 1872 some 13,000 acres as Mount Laurel Township) by William R. Lippincott for the Burlington County Historical Society, 25 April 1911, and published in the " Moorestown Republican", it is stated that " The farm house near Evesboro, now owned by Aaran L. Collins, was once a hotel", the name of proprietor not being given. In some degree of contradiction, it may be noted that the well-known Green Tree tavern was only a half mile distant from this house.

That the lesser unit of this two part house was later erected as a western end extension of the larger unit is clearly evident in the date 1764 in the west gable end of the latter being concealed by the garret and roof of the first. In spite of the stucco facing which has since disguised the exterior, lattice pattern work in the brickwork of the north-east gable end is still evident, an ornamental detail found in other houses of the period in this county and more extensively in Salem County, in the English tradition.

A very striking feature is the doorway in the center of the second floor of the southeast front, with no means of access from the ground, a so-called "funeral door" customary in the West New Jersey Quaker farmhouses on account of the narrow and winding boxed stairs within. The fashion of "laying out" the corpse in a coffin in the bed chamber antedated the front parlor funeral.

The larger size of the twelve glass lights in each window and the lighter scale of the wood muntins indicate replacement about 1800 of the original sash of 1764. In the living room, the fine bevel-edge panelled overmantel, containing a cupboard, is contemporary with the structure, but the mantel in the dining room is a curious piece in the transition from late Federal style, and is obviously not the original one there.

Bibliography:

Brief of title searched in Burlington  
County Land and Probate records by  
Oscar F. Benjamin, H.A.B.S.

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Approved:

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